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ABSTRACT

Most superintendents experience high levels of stress associated with their school administrator role. This paper reports on a survey conducted to help Maine superintendents better understand the stressors inherent in their role. The Survey of Superintendent Stressors was distributed to all 1989-90 Maine public school superintendents and a selected group of retired and former superintendents. Of the 160 surveys distributed, 100 were returned, for a 62.5 percent response rate. Tabulated responses were analyzed according to a total stress scale and supplemented by narrative responses. The area of highest reported stress was in the position's daily roles and responsibilities. Other stressors included personal demands, interactions with state education agencies, and relations with the school board, staff, and the public. Although study results support other research on educational administrator stress, there is little evidence that superintendents experience more stress than other professional managers. Administrators need to identify the sources of stress and create strategies for managing them in the workplace. Additionally, strategies must be developed to reduce professional isolationism and recognize the importance of personal health, well-being, and professional growth. Educational organizations, universities, and legislators must seek long-term solutions to modify and improve the superintendent role. (25 references) (MLH)

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College of Education
University of Maine
Occasional Paper Series:

No. 14

Stressed for Success: A Study of Stress and the Superintendency

By

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SAD #42

and

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STRESSED FOR SUCCESS:

A STUDY OF STRESS AND THE SUPERINTENDENCY

BY

MARK S. EASTMAN, ED.D.
DENISE A. MIROCHNIK, ED.M.

JUNE 1991

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A graduate of the University of Maine at Portland/Gorham in History and Government in 1967, Eastman went on to attend the University of Kentucky Law School. He then earned a Masters degree in Educational Administration at the University of Southern Maine in 1972 and completed his doctoral work with Nova University in 1986. He currently serves as President of the Aroostook County Superintendents' Association, is Co-Director of Aroostook CSPD, and is a member of the Public School Commission of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. He has been the recipient of several major grants, including two from the Carnegie Foundation. A project Dr. Eastman co-authored on teaching models and learning styles was named as a national finalist for the Nova University School Improvement Award.

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STRESSED FOR SUCCESS: A STUDY OF STRESS AND THE SUPERINTENDENCY

Mark S. Eastman, Ed.D.
Denise A. Mirochnik, Ed.M.

INTRODUCTION

Long before the school day starts, Maine superintendents are making decisions which affect the lives of the more than 200,000 public school children getting ready to come to school. Long after those same children board school buses toward home, school superintendents continue to make critical decisions, often into the wee hours of the morning. Those same superintendents continue that schedule long after school closes in June and long before school begins again in September. In short, the school superintendent is rarely off the job.

The responsibilities and problems inherent in the position of the superintendency are wide in scope and variety. Superintendents are seen handling a variety of situations from attending community events, talking to the media, meeting with parents, supervising building construction and renovation, negotiating with teacher unions and meeting with school boards. In smaller districts, it is not uncommon to find superintendents answering telephones, filling in

for bookkeepers and principals, or driving school buses. Superintendents must wear every hat and juggle every ball....well.

There is no "safe" place for a superintendent. It is a position fraught with contradictions. Superintendents must lead in environments where few decisions are their own, alone, and where there are often few allies. Even school reform efforts often target superintendents as key to implementing school change. Is it no wonder there is a growing shortage of qualified candidates? Dr. Jerome Murphy of Harvard University's Graduate School of Education summed it up best in his recent article on the superintendency where he compared the role of the superintendent to that of one battered quarterback. "One week you're a hero; next week you're a zero" (Murphy, 1991, p. 510).

This type of stress comes with the role, many superintendents report. But, many are inadequately prepared to cope with such high degrees of stress and report they must leave the profession. The role of the superintendent must be reevaluated to identify the potential and actual sources of stress so that appropriate interventions and coping strategies can be developed.

SOURCES OF STRESS: THE PERSON OR THE ENVIRONMENT?

What is stress anyway? Definitions of stress incorporate environmental, psychological, physiological and social factors, each accompanied by a varied set of manifestations. "Stress" is a vague

and ambiguous term which embodies a collection of symptoms. This ambiguity results in the lack of consensus as to what stress is and has resulted in the lack of a generally accepted single theoretical framework from which to examine the effect stress has on behavior in organizational settings. While stress often is perceived in "negative" terms, the overworked executive has often equated it with success in business.

Organizational stress refers to those conditions within the work environment that create overload and/or resource allocation problems and reward discrepancies. Individual strain refers to undesirable or unhealthy responses, physical and psychological, that occur as a result of the organizational stress (Wiggins, 1988). Stress affects a person's motivation, mental health, approach to life adjustment and self-actualization (Chand, 1990).

Friedman and Rosenman (1974) made popular the term ***Type A behavior*** in their description of individuals with fast-paced personality styles. Tye and Tye (1984) suggest that these individuals often exhibit behavior which is work-oriented, hurried, isolated and impatient. One needn't be an expert on health to realize that these characteristics abound in modern literature as predictors of heart and related diseases.

French and Caplan (1972) explain stress in terms of an individual's reaction to the organization. If role conflict occurs, one manifestation is stress. French and Kahn (1976) further explain this phenomenon with person-environment fit theory. Stress occurs when an individual's needs are not met by the organization. The

elimination of stress occurs when either the individual or environment is changed. Feitler and Tokar (1986) questioned this assumption when their study could not link stress to an isolated environmental source. They argue that stress may be an "individual response to circumstances, events or personal interpretation" (p. 267).

Superintendents may suffer from self-imposed stress (internal) and through stressors found in the work environment (Wiggins, 1988). Stressors may include an angry parent, a budget miscalculation, a child abuse case, or an overbearing board member. These stressors are what Charlesworth and Nathan (1982) define as "the external demands of life or the internal attitudes and thoughts that require us to adapt" (p. 22). Stressors can come from the work environment, inner struggles, expectations of others, or expectations we hold for ourselves. According to Slezak (1984), "stress is integrally related to control: the greater one's sense of powerlessness over the stressor, the greater the stress" (p. 31). Wiggins (1985, 1988) examined occupational stressors related to critical decisions in educational administration and found several general types of stressors in the work environment: emergencies, need to get things done on time, dislike/lack of acceptance by co-workers, fear of making errors/consequences, lack of communication, overwork, meetings, lack of performance feedback and appreciation/recognition, lack of authority, too much responsibility, and the inability to satisfy conflicting demands of various peers. Wells (1982) surveyed 320 superintendents in New York state and

found that superintendents classified stress into specific stress areas and general stress areas. The specific stress areas superintendents cited most often were: complying with state and federal mandates, discharging staff, cutting school system costs and negotiations. (Wells, 1982, p. 9). Wells (1982) also found that younger superintendents tended to experience more stress than older superintendents; male superintendents experienced more stress than females; superintendents in smaller districts experienced more stress than in larger districts; and rural superintendents found the superintendency more stressful than non-rural superintendents.

Understanding the sources of stress is critical to determining coping strategies. Much of the literature reports how superintendents deal with high levels of stress and emphasizes coping techniques rather than strategies for reducing or eliminating stressors (Wells, 1982). One of the prevailing questions to consider is: Can the superintendent modify the working environment in an effort to remove stressors?

TODAY'S SUPERINTENDENT IN TODAY'S SCHOOLS

SUPERINTENDENT POSITION*
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Located adjacent to Anycity on the north and east, the district serves the progressive community of Anytown. 5,833 K-12 students are enrolled in 10 schools. Required is a skilled listener and communicator, a strong educational leader, a planner and organizer. Inquiries, applications, résumés and references should be directed to:
Anytown School Board

*Based on an actual advertisement in *Education Week*.

Many advertisements for superintendents are purposefully vague. The variety of tasks and skills required to manage *today's* school districts couldn't possibly be reflected in a single advertisement. *Today's* superintendent must be many things to many people--vastly different from the superintendent of the 1950s. *Today's* superintendent must be "effective" amidst many pluralistic forces which shape the day-to-day management of schools. Murphy (1991) describes the effective superintendent as both a tough manager and a caring educator; a shrewd politician and one that

communicates shared values and promotes the common good; a coalition builder, building alliances and advocating for children (p. 512). Do these contrasting trait requirements sound stressful?

Change is needed. It is not enough to merely identify the problem; something needs to be done. Many school reform efforts are aimed at re-defining the role of the superintendent and other key administrative staff members. The National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration prepared a report in 1987, *Leaders for America's Schools,* which outlined several key recommendations for improving school leaders. These included:

- Redefining educational leadership,
- Establishing a national policy board on educational administration
- University preparation programs should be modeled on "professional" schools,
- Women and minorities should be recruited,
- Professional development activities should be enhanced,
- Licensure programs should be reformed.

Other efforts have focused on the redefinition of management style. Decentralization and site-based management techniques feature the dispersion of decision-making authority. One could conclude this could lower stress levels, at least on some level, or it could be interpreted as yet another dilution of a superintendent's influence and power.

The impact of stress on structural changes needs to be closely examined. Perhaps the role of superintendent needs to include more autonomy and discretionary decision-making authority. Perhaps

governance needs to be re-thought. Perhaps we need to reconceive pay scales and benefits to get them on a par with other professionals experiencing the same levels of responsibility, job stress, and time spent on job. But does that really change the role?

Seymour Sarason (1981) in his classic book *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change* said that to understand change we must first consider the "universe of alternatives" and identify "regularities," that is, those conditions that exist on a regular and continuing basis and are observable. Stress in the superintendency is fast becoming an observable regularity. Its outcomes are evidenced by lack of thinking clearly or acting effectively (Papallo, 1990). Other manifestations are physical. Many superintendents report fatigue, stomach disorders and other stress-related illnesses precipitated by the position. Understanding the amount of stress unique to the role of the superintendent is one clue to understanding how the role could be improved. More attention needs to be given to the amount of stress in the superintendency to better address the needs of today's educational leaders.

THE STUDY

An Introduction. The presence of high levels of stress in the role of school administrator is a perceived reality for most school superintendents. Stress is a part of everyday life and is fast becoming an integral component of professional experience.

A certain level of stress challenges us to a task and often boosts our performance level. The adrenalin rush that is experienced in a

highly stressful situation, however, should serve as a reminder that high levels of stress over a long period of time lead to distress. This distress causes emotional and physical symptoms which often produce unhealthy responses and consequences. The key to remaining "stressed for success" is to understand where stressors come from and to learn to manage those situations. Superintendents need to control the harmful effects of prolonged adrenalin arousal (Hart, 1986).

This *Survey of Superintendent Stressors* was conducted to help Maine superintendents better understand the stressors inherent in their role. It is hoped that the knowledge gained from this survey will enhance role understanding and provide insights to improved performance.

The Instrument. A questionnaire was developed after an extensive review of the literature yielded a list of typical stressors found in managerial roles. The questionnaire was distributed to 10 superintendents for review and analysis of the items. The purpose of the review was to determine if the questions accurately reflected the role. A final questionnaire was then developed and pilot-tested with 10 superintendents.

All 1989-1990 Maine public school superintendents were asked to respond to the *Survey of Superintendent Stressors.* In addition, a selected group of retired and former superintendents were queried. In all, 160 surveys were distributed.

The *Survey of Superintendent Stressors* was divided into 10 categories: general informational issues; school board relations; public relations; staff relations; roles/responsibilities; examining the role of the state department of education and other state and regional agencies; personal demands on superintendents; personal health of the superintendent; improving the role; and the most satisfying aspects of the superintendency.

The survey was designed to allow superintendents to define, in a relative manner, their perception of the level of stress on 80 different stressors in six areas. In addition, another 22 objective and two narrative questions were included to solicit input on the most satisfying aspects of the superintendents' role, as well as activities which might help improve the job of superintendent.

Responses to the stressors were recorded on the basis of an 11 point scale (0-10). Participants selecting a high number were reporting the presence of many of the symptoms of stress while a low rating indicated an absence of these symptoms. A rating in the mid-range indicates the presence of a perceived moderate level of stress.

RESULTS

Of the questionnaires mailed, 100 responses, or a 62.5% response rate, were received from a single mailing. The returns included five females and nine retired superintendents. Information from the 100 responses was collected and organized into 10 different tables. These tables were supplemented by several

open-ended comment sections and two narrative sections. Results were cross-tabulated by size of district.

A total stress scale was developed to analyze the wide range of responses received and was based upon the respondents' perceived stress levels. We interpreted those responses that were above 5.50 as high stress levels. Moderate stress levels were in the 4.00-5.49 range with low stress levels below 3.99.

Narrative responses were used to support analytical data in each category. Responses to the final two issues were analyzed individually and grouped according to categories of personal and professional issues. These responses will be reviewed in the discussion section.

GENERAL FINDINGS - POTENTIAL SOURCES OF STRESS

Demographic Information. Table 1 reports general demographic information. More than half of the superintendents responding to the survey were between the ages 36-45, had held one or two superintendencies, and were from districts with fewer than 2500 students. Seventy-one percent of the respondents said they took their positions in order to accept the challenge of providing leadership to a school system. Only a few (6%), indicated that the desire for an increase in salary and benefits was a prime motivation in their becoming a superintendent. Approximately 70% of the superintendents surveyed responded that they had never

experienced a major health problem. Of the 30% that had, one-third reported they thought the health problem was job related (See Table 2).

The ratings of potential sources of stress by category ranged from 5.89 in the area of roles/responsibilities (most stressful) to public relations (least stressful), with an average rating of 4.99 on the scale rating scale 0-10. Other category ratings were: personal demands (5.35); state department role (5.24); school board relationship (5.12); and staff relations (5.07).

Roles/Responsibilities. The area of highest reported stress levels was in the day-to-day roles and responsibilities of the superintendents. Nine items received ratings of over 6.0 on the scale (See Table 3). Superintendents reported that preparing budgets, dealing with the pressures created by expansion, and the addition of new responsibilities were all sources of high stress on the job. These role-defined conflicts were followed by the personal need for relaxation and time for reflection.

"The pressures have increased tenfold over the last 22 years," reported a veteran administrator. "I can do all required tasks, but too many tasks require attention at the same time. Even our school attorneys refer to their specialists, yet I deal with all these issues and am expected to be perfect," contributed another.

Others believed that the never ending stream of managerial tasks was too consuming with "never enough time in the day." Many superintendents reported a growing sense of powerlessness in areas

where administrators have no control, but are perceived to have it. One superintendent termed it the basic responsibility/authority dichotomy. "If you are responsible to get something done, you should have the authority to get it done!"

Personal Demands. Personal demands on superintendents were found to leave them with little time to pursue individual social and leisure needs, reinforcing the idea that superintendents find it difficult to leave the job behind. The most significant stressor reported by the respondents was the year-round extensive time demands of the position (See Table 4).

"Time on task and general overall responsibility causes me the most stress. I work long hours and feel that I do not have enough time for the family," one superintendent reported. A frequent source of stress was the inability to schedule family activities due to professional conflicts.

"Overall, the stressors are stimulating, except the lack of time for family and friends, personal space." Superintendents reported that being visible in the community, "life in the fishbowl," was a constant source of stress.

Over half of the superintendents reported that they do not utilize all of their vacation time. On an average, superintendents report using only 70% of the annual vacation time allowed. Over half of the superintendents surveyed also reported they have little time to develop relationships with colleagues.

Examining the Role of the State Department of Education and Other State and Regional Agencies. Interactions with the State Department of Education were reported as stressful by many superintendents. Almost two-thirds of the superintendents surveyed reported that handling requests from state agencies for reports, surveys, verifications and audits was an ongoing source of stress (See Table 5).

"State agencies (the MDE) are strongly influencing the trend to leave the superintendency," one superintendent noted.

"The number one nuisance and headache for the superintendent is DECS and DHS with all their requests and regulations," said another.

"Smaller units cannot keep pace with the requirements and still have resources and staff left to educate children," another reported.

In addition to the concern over paperwork and reports, many superintendents reported disappointment with increasing state control.

"We never had local control anyway, from my point of view. I guess I am frustrated with the Department's attempt to float the illusion of local control and assume we would not all see the sham," one superintendent commented.

Others report "My main stress with the Department is its inability to react to questions or requests, i.e. certification....no one ever comes out to the schools to provide assistance. No one can provide direction to me from DECS." Two-thirds of the superintendents expressed confusion over knowing whether or not

the function of the state department was one of regulation or assistance.

School Board Relations. The highest average rating reported of all stressors in the survey was leading the school board through a controversial issue, which received an average rating of 7.44 (0-10 scale) (See Table 6). Superintendents reported that this occurs between two - four times on the average each year. Other major stressors involved handling school board dynamics, such as working with hostile confrontive board members or working with a split board. Helping an unschooled board member understand their role was often identified as stressful. Superintendents reported that the importance of a competent chairperson to the overall functioning of the board was essential. Several superintendents noted they were fortunate to have outstanding board chairs.

One superintendent commented that a "cognitive dissonance" existed between superintendents and school boards. "We have in our minds," he wrote, "ideas that don't mix. For instance, the idea that the superintendent is 'in charge' of the school system doesn't mix with the idea that we must ask permission from a group of lay people-- 'the board' -- on how things should be done."

Another supports this view with the following comments: "I think school committees should be demoted to trustees who meet four times per year for general oversight evaluations. I think superintendents should be like hospital administrators, for example. They should be allowed to 'run' the system and then take

responsibility for it. This present system is archaic at best, destructive at worst!"

Many school boards have an unrestricted public participation item on the regular meeting agenda. This was reported to cause stress for many superintendents. Boards and superintendents are often blindsided by personal issue complaints that have not followed regular board policy channels. These complaints often get public and press attention before the administration can investigate and/or resolve them.

The survey results also revealed a high level of stress for school union superintendents who work for a number of boards. They often experience a lifetime of board meetings and a career's worth of board members in a relatively short period. "With five school committees, events tend to blur and often are soon forgotten when replaced by the next crisis," one union superintendent reported.

Staff Relations. Stressful areas in staff relations are found in firing, non-renewing, and reprimanding staff and bargaining with teachers (see Table 7). In the area of disciplining staff, one superintendent noted, "Correcting...is not as stressful if done immediately - thinking about it raises [stress] levels and extends pressure."

Another respondent added, "negotiations present the most stressful situation because of the inability of both sides at times to listen to the full-time, day-to-day guardian of the taxpayer monies!"

"All are sensitive areas," reported another, "particularly in smaller units."

Public Relations. About half of the superintendents reported that presenting or arguing for a local budget increase was frequently a potential source of stress (see Table 8). This was followed by approximately two-thirds of the superintendents reporting that the firing of a well-known coach or teacher would cause stress, though less than half had actually done so. More than half of the superintendents reported that dealing with angry parents was a source of stress, with one-third reporting that they do so on an occasional basis.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study support other studies of educational administrator stress, though there is little to support the idea that superintendents experience more stress than other professional managers. This study, and others, suggest that administrators need to identify the sources of stress and create strategies for the management of stressors in the workplace. Individuals must identify those sources of stress over which they have control, and those which are manifestations of the environment. Strategies for implementing organizational change must be sought to create better working environments. Suggested strategies have included: attendance at school sponsored workshops and conferences;

individual exercise programs led by trained professionals; in-service training on negotiation and conflict resolution; institution-wide efforts at reducing stress, not only for the superintendent but for teachers and students.

Respondents also suggested ways to improve the role and listed numerous satisfying aspects of the superintendency. When asked to rate activities as to the importance in improving the role of the superintendent, the highest rated area for improving the role is the development of a strong administrative team to provide for district level support, planning, and direction. The need for a strong administrative team was also listed as number one in importance by retired superintendents.

Also rated highly was the need for the statewide superintendents organization to become more pro-active for superintendents. In the words of one superintendent, "Peer support/interaction is most important as a stabilizing force to help maintain proper perspective." Another reported on the need to establish regional crisis intervention teams which are available to superintendents who might request assistance with personal or professional issues. Other support was recommended in regionalizing state services, especially in the areas of facilities, such as oil storage tank removal, asbestos and lead/radon testing. These efforts would allow superintendents to focus more often on educational issues (See Table 9).

The most satisfying aspects of the superintendency largely focused on community and student responses to school (See Table

10). Most superintendents find satisfaction in such areas as program improvement, "making a difference" or "seeing better teaching/learning due to your efforts." Several superintendents also reported enjoying the personal self-esteem that comes from "watching others grow through your leadership" and "knowing that the education of young people has improved because of you." The less satisfying aspects of the role are issues involving union activity, grievance arbitration, and litigation.

The superintendency is challenging, yet rewarding. Managing the stress that comes with the role is important to a successful career and healthy lifestyle. Aspiring and currently employed superintendents should consider the following implications of this study when considering the possibility of being "stressed for success."

1. ***Strategies need to be developed to reduce the isolationism inherent in the superintendent's role.*** As was discussed earlier, a strong in-house administrative team is helpful, but is not the only support that is needed. When conflicts occur, it is often between administrative team members. When these disputes cannot be resolved, a polarization of the district may occur. Therefore, it is important for the superintendent to maintain a strong mentor or support team outside of the local school unit. Not only will the mentor/support team provide support but also advice and counsel as the superintendent develops

strategies to address controversial issues. A strong school board chair who understands the demands on the superintendent can help ease overall stress.

2. ***Stressors must be identified and specific strategies developed to reduce them.***

It is important for superintendents to understand their role as well as board goals and objectives. Board goals and objectives must be broad-based and have community support. The makeup of a board may dramatically change in one election; therefore, board priorities may shift with new board members. Long-range plans that are collaboratively developed by all segments of the school community help avoid these shifting priorities. It is also important for superintendents to realize that some things cannot be changed. School officials often need the grace to work with these political or community realities, realizing that the frustration level can only be reduced through acceptance of the unchangeable. Further, it is important for the superintendent and community to achieve a good match, culturally and socially.

3. ***The personal health and well-being of the superintendent must be a priority.*** Most superintendents report the need for more personal time and space because the extensive demands of the superintendency place great pressure on families. It is helpful for superintendents to participate in wellness/exercise programs. This usually is helpful in reducing stress and maintaining self-esteem. Also, the presence of hobbies/diversions help superintendents focus on other things that allow disengagement from the tyranny of the urgent and cult of the clean desk.

4. ***A priority of the superintendent should be professional growth and skill improvement.*** Superintendents need to realize that a comprehensive plan for personal professional development is critical to gaining the new skills necessary to meet changing demands and responsibilities. The acquisition of new or improved skills helps superintendents deal with the difficulties that often appear in the transition into the superintendency. Skills in finance, community relations and system educational leadership are often critical to improving performance on the job.

5. ***Educational organizations, universities and legislators must seek long-term solutions to modify and improve the role of the superintendent.*** The administrator supply and demand report published by the Maine Department of Education discussed the serious problems which school districts will face in acquiring skilled leadership over the next ten years. Many more superintendents are leaving the profession than are entering. Current efforts by the Maine LEADership Consortium, the Department of Education and the Maine School Superintendents Association are assisting in developing a broader pool of candidates for the superintendency. These groups also need to continue their work with school boards to enlighten citizens about the demands of the superintendency. The development of a support system for new superintendents as well as the establishing of a mentor network for practicing superintendents will also assist superintendents in job performance and longevity. Finally, further research needs to be conducted to better understand the causes of stress and its effects on job performance toward the goal of redefining the superintendents role.

Education in the twenty-first century will require skilled, responsible leadership. School superintendents are vital to the quality and progress of our school systems. It is imperative that superintendents understand their roles and develop skills to properly manage the stress that is inherent to the role. In addition, school board members and policymakers need to be sensitive to the pressures incumbent upon superintendents'. Recognition of the degree of stress inherent to the role is only a beginning. Effective strategies must be developed and implemented which address the changing role of the superintendency in today's schools.

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Table 1
GENERAL INFORMATION

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1 Number of superintendent positions held:
1 = 47%; 2 = 35%; 3 = 10%

2 Age at time of first superintendency/assistant superintendency:
Less than 30 = 2%; 30 to 25 = 20%; 36 to 40 = 47%;
41 to 45 = 18%

3 Married:
Yes = 96%; No = 4%

4 Spouse work:
Yes = 74%

5 Size of your district:
0-1000 = 43%
1000-2500 = 51%
2501+ = 6%

6 Number of board/board committee evening meetings per month:
0 to 1 = 9%; 2 to 4 = 52%; 5 to 7 = 21%; 8 to 10 = 15% 11+ = 6%

7 Number of other evening meetings per month:
0 to 1 = 10%; 2 to 4 = 33%; 5 to 7 = 34%; 8 to 10 = 17%; 11+ = 7%

8 Do you have newspaper coverage at board meetings?
Every meeting = 56%
Occasionally = 28%
Rarely = 9%
Never = 7%

9 Do you have TV coverage at board meetings?
Every meeting = 10%
Occasionally = 15%
Rarely = 15%
Never = 65%

10 Do you have radio coverage at board meetings?
Every meeting = 4%
Occasionally = 10%
Rarely = 15%
Never = 71%

11 How many citizens, on average, attend your regular board meetings?
7

Table 1 - cont'd
General Information

12 How much vacation time are you allowed?
22 days

13 How much vacation time do you take?
15 days

14 Why did you decided to become a superintendent?

6%	**4**	**Increase in salary and benefits.**
71%	**1**	**The opportunity to provide educational leadership to a school system.**
6%	**3**	**The opportunity to lead a large organization.**
13%	**2**	**To provide help and assistance to students.**

Table 2

The Personal Health of the Superintendent

	QUESTION	RESPONSE YES	NO
1	Have you ever had a major health problem?	30%	70%
2	Do you believe the problem was job related?	35%	65%
3	Did the problem force you to change jobs?	8%	92%
4	Did the problem cause you to retire?	8%	92%
5	Has a high stress level been a consideration in making a job change?	44%	56%
6	How much sick leave do you use annually?	0-3 days (89%)	
7	What stress reduction techniques do you use:		
	exercise - 55%; time management - 50%; problem solving - 28% mentor - 10%; hobbies - 58%; team management - 38%; support group - 18%; family - 9%.		

Table 3

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF STRESS:
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

	AREA	PROBLEM (PERCENT) S	O	F*	RATE/RATING	
1	Dealing with pressure created by expansion; moreover the addition of new responsibilities without dismissing previously assigned roles (e.g. asbestos, certification, etc.)	6	47	47	6.86	1
2	A growing sense of powerlessness over areas where administrators have no control but are perceived to have it.	22	56	22	6.40	5
3	Providing educational leadership.	30	27	43	5.24	13
4	Being consumed by daily managerial tasks	13	37	50	6.52	4
5	Keeping abreast of the shifting expectations initiated at the state and federal level.	10	38	52	6.13	6
6	Finding time for vision and reflection.	15	35	50	6.01	8
7	Developing, preparing, and presenting an annual budget for consideration by the board and community	16	40	44	6.77	2
8	Maintaining reading and study time to keep current with educational research.	12	35	53	5.41	10
9	Developing solutions to problems in a timely manner.	21	47	32	5.30	12
10	Managing the budget	30	30	40	5.36	11

Table 3 - cont'd
Roles and Responsibilities

11	Finding times for personal relaxation/enjoyment and being able to do so (leave the job behind).	30	24	46	6.58	3
12	Responding to new initiatives or reforms in education.	19	35	46	6.05	7
13	Meeting the demands of a school construction project.	30	39	31	6.01	8
14	Dealing with the pressure created by decline.	62	27	11	3.83	14
	Average Rating: 5.89					

***KEY:**
PROBLEM: Please indicate if the issue listed has been a problem for you Circle S for Seldom, O for Occasionally, or F for Frequently.
Rate: Please rate the stress level, 0 - 10.
Level of Stress: Low-------High
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Table 4

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF STRESS:
PERSONAL DEMANDS ON SUPERINTENDENTS

	AREA	PROBLEM (PERCENT) S	O	F*	RATE/RATING	
1	Dealing with pressures of life as community property, "life in the fishbowl."	24	41	35	5.81	5
2	Handling the pressure of being the chief school officer in the unit and the sense of isolation which often accompanies this role.	22	39	39	6.06	3
3	Handling the general lack of respect by the public for the role of Superintendent.	48	32	10	4.88	7
4	Working with the year round, extensive time demands of the position.	16	28	56	6.72	1
5	Dealing with the inability to develop and maintain a comprehensive personal fitness program on a daily basis.	26	22	52	4.48	9
6	Scheduling and using annual vacation time.	26	19	55	5.86	4
7	Developing interests and associations which are removed from school and school problems.	35	23	42	5.06	6
8	Scheduling family activities and demands in light of conflicts with professional demands.	15	38	47	6.23	2

Table 4 - cont'd
Personal Demands

9	Relationships with colleagues.	62	28	10	3.54	**10**
10	Handling the tension created for spouse and family by your position in community.	43	39	18	4.82	**8**

Average Rating: 5.35

***KEY:**
PROBLEM: Please indicate if the issue listed has been a problem for you Circle S for Seldom, O for Occasionally, or F for Frequently.
Rate: Please rate the stress level, 0 - 10.
Level of Stress: Low-------High
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Table 5

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF STRESS:
EXAMINING THE ROLE OF
THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND
OTHER STATE AND REGIONAL AGENCIES

	AREA	PROBLEM (PERCENT) S	O	F*	RATE/RATING	
1	Dealing with the increased control of local schools by the state department of education.	24	44	32	5.65	3
2	Handling requests from state agencies for reports, surveys, verfications, and audits.	4	32	64	6.78	1
3	Preparing/hosting the state school approval/accreditation process.	40	52	8	5.01	7
4	Preparing/hosting the regional school accreditation process.	57	28	15	4.31	11
5	Preparing/hosting a special education review.	39	52	9	4.94	8
6	Preparing/hosting a school nutrition review.	42	50	8	4.79	9
7	Interacting with DHS.	36	39	24	5.52	4
8	Handling the increased emphasis of the state/federal bureaucracy on adversarial site reviews and visitations.	42	47	11	5.28	5
9	Dealing with the loss of local control of curriculum.	50	35	15	4.37	10
10	Knowing if the "role" of DECS on an issue is one of regulation or assistance.	36	44	18	5.18	6

Table 5 - cont'd
Examining the Role

11	Handling child abuse and neglect reporting and follow-up.	42	42	16	5.81	2

Average Rating: 5.24

***KEY:**
PROBLEM: Please indicate if the issue listed has been a problem for you Circle S for Seldom, O for Occasionally, or F for Frequently.
Rate: Please rate the stress level, 0 - 10.
Level of Stress: Low-------High
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Table 6
POTENTIAL SOURCES OF STRESS:
SCHOOL BOARD RELATIONS

	AREA	FREQUENCY	TIMES PER YEAR	RATE/RATING	
1	Leading the school board through a controversial issue.	50%	2 to 4	7.44	1
2	Inrteracting with a hostile, confrontative board member.	39%	0 to 1	6.40	2
3	Handling public feedback/ criticism that occurs in the public participation portion of your regular agenda.	39%	2 to 4	5.64	4
4	Dealing with an unschooled board member, assisting them in understanding their mission.	44%	2 to 4	4.98	7
5	Staying abreast of shifting board priorities with every new board election.	48%	0 to 1	4.69	10
6	Working with the board on policy enforcement issues, especially athletic eligibility or student disciplinary actions.	50%	2 to 4	4.49	11
7	Being given overly ambitious goals by the board.	46%	0 to 1	4.23	12
8	Being evaluated by the board.	80%	0 to 1	4.95	8
9	Negotiating with the board on your contract.	85%	0 to 1	5.06	6
10	Working with an aggressive board chair.	46%	0 to 1	3.99	15

Table 6 - cont'd
School Board Relations

11	Working with a weak board chair.	42%	0 to 1	4.21	**13**
12	Defending a staff member to the board.	42%	2 to 4	5.54	**5**
13	Nonrenewing a staff member who has board support.	67%	0 to 1	4.91	**9**
14	Dealing with requests for favors by board members.	38%	0 to 1	4.10	**14**
15	Working with a split board.	38%	0 to 1	5.71	**3**

Average Rating: 5.12

***KEY:**
FREQUENCY: Please estimate the number of times this has happened to you.
Rate: Please rate the stress level, 0 - 10.
Level of Stress: Low-------High
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Table 7

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF STRESS: STAFF RELATIONS

	AREA	PROBLEM (PERCENT) S	O	F*	RATE/RATING	
1	Administering the collective bargaining agreement	28	45	27	5.37	7
2	Mediations between subordinates and staff.	35	58	7	5.38	6
3	Handling of staff grievances.	41	52	7	5.65	4
4	Bargaining with teachers.	15	56	29	6.58	2
5	Bargaining with support staff.	33	46	21	5.58	5
6	Bargaining with administrators.	51	37	12	4.54	12
7	Deciding to cancel school due to questionable weather conditions.	27	42	31	5.28	8
8	Approving/denying personal leave requests.	31	46	23	4.51	13
9	Hiring qualified staff.	19	29	52	4.57	11
10	Working with a curriculum development project.	29	51	20	3.73	17
11	Developing new policy.	24	47	29	3.92	15
12	Evaluating administrative team members.	27	44	29	4.91	10
13	Directing bookkeeper/ bus manager on financial matters (correcting).	44	45	11	4.37	14

Table 7 - cont'd
Staff Relations

14	Evaluating/directing your office staff.	41	43	16	3.9	16
15	Confronting staff on errors in judgement or action.	27	62	11	5.75	3
16	Administering schools during, labor-management disputes-work slowdowns, etc.	80	17	3	4.98	9
17	Firing, nonrenewing, and reprimanding staff.	32	65	3	7.26	1

Average Rating: 5.07

***KEY:**
PROBLEM: Please indicate if the issue listed has been a problem for you Circle S for Seldom, O for Occasionally, or F for Frequently.
Rate: Please rate the stress level, 0 - 10.
Level of Stress: Low-------High
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Table 8

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF STRESS:
PUBLIC RELATIONS

	AREA	PROBLEM (PERCENT) S	O	F*	RATE/RATING	
1	Interacting with the media and the negative consequences of unfair reporting	37	32	7	5.39	6
2	Getting the school's message into the press, i.e., positive publicity which announces student/school achievements.	33	35	32	3.47	12
3	Interacting with special interest groups, i.e., sports boosters, music boosters, etc.	47	48	5	4.49	9
4	Confronting with angry or upset parents.	43	54	3	5.99	4
5	Interacting with parent/ advisory groups which seek to mold policy.	43	54	3	4.59	8
6	Dealing with the pressures of firing a well known teacher or coach.	64	35	1	6.44	2
7	Attending functions at individual schools					
	During the day.....	22	44	34	3.01	13
	During the evening.....	18	50	32	3.70	11
8	Addressing the public at graduation, awards assemblies, etc.	30	50	20	3.9	10
9	Answering questions at a public meeting	13	44	43	4.82	7

Table 8 - cont'd
Public Relations

10	Dealing with a crisis situation, student/staff death, fire, or natural disaster.	56	42	2	6.03	3
11	Presenting unflattering information to board/public (i.e. MEA's of 150)	35	63	2	5.8	5
12	Presenting/arguing for a local budget	11	43	46	7.24	1
	Average Rating: 4.99					

***KEY:**
PROBLEM: Please indicate if the issue listed has been a problem for you Circle S for Seldom, O for Occasionally, or F for Frequently.
Rate: Please rate the stress level, 0 - 10.
Level of Stress: Low-------High
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Table 9
IMPROVING THE ROLE

	AREA	RATING	RANKING
1	MSSA should conduct a public relations campaign to improve the image of superintendents.	7.24	6
2	School boards should be encouraged to increase the superintendents salary to insure a level of pay which reflects their complex and demanding role.	7.31	4
3	School boards should work to decentralize the administrative function and empower teachers to assume greater responsibility.	4.35	11
4	Every superintendent should develop a peer group for support, enrichment, and problem solving.	6.86	7
5	Every superintendent should have a mentor to provide support and encouragement.	6.29	10
6	Each superintendent should develop a strong in-house administrative team to provide for district level support, planning, and direction.	8.68	1
7	The state BPI should have regional offices with technicians to handle building issues such as asbestos, oil storage tanks, lead and radon testing. Funding for these improvements should be provided directly by the state.	7.83	3
8	The state should develop regional information sharing centers which might provide support, knowledge, and shared resources.	6.71	8
9	The state should adopt statewide teacher negotiations.	7.25	5
10	MSSA should become a more pro-active organization on behalf of superintendents.	7.95	2

Table 9 - cont'd
Improving the Role

11	Superintendents should be required to use all vacation time annually unless exception is requested and granted by the board.	6.61	9

***KEY:**
Rate: Please rate the following activities as to their importance in improving the role of the superintendent.
Level of Stress: Low-------High
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Table 10

THE MOST SATISFYING ASPECTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENCY

	AREA
1	Hearing community members expressing pride in the local school system.
2	Watching students grow, mature and fulfill their potential.
3	Watching positive productive student/teacher interaction.
4	Development/adoption of a long-range district improvement plan.
5	Being complimented on a job well done by a board member.
6	Knowing that something for which others got credit, was really the result of something you had done or set in motion.
7	Seeing a positive editorial about you or your unit in the local paper.
8	Receiving a positive evaluation from board and having salary increased by more than 6 percent.
9	Successfully engineering a school construction bond referendum.
10	Settling a multi-year contract with the teachers union.
11	Winning a grievance or court suit involving the contract.

KEY:
Order ranked 1 to 11 with 1 being the most satisfying, etc.

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